

# OPEN LETTER TO

30 November, 1992

Your Excellency,

**AS** your excellency Prime Minister Chuan Leekphai has declared an important government policy to solve the problem of prostitution in Thailand, we, 170 women from 63 countries who have participated in the International Women's Conference, "Women Overcoming Violence", held in Bangkok during 25 November - 1 December 1992, would respectfully propose a guideline for ending violence of prostitution in Thailand as follows :

1. If the Thai laws do not penalize clients of prostitution, the Conference urges respectfully that the Royal Thai Government (RTG) abolish the 1960 Prostitution Act which only penalizes prostitutes. We feel this law is unjust because prostitution is an activity which must necessarily involve both the client and service woman in order for the offence to be committed. The existing prostitution law in Thailand is biased against women, penalizing only the service women, not the male clients. This allows service women to be controlled by owners of the "brothels" or government officials and makes detention of these women possible.

2. The Conference respectfully urges the RTG to penalize clients who receive service from girls aged under 18 by listing this offence as a criminal act similar to the Penal Code which penalizes the rapist of girls under 15. This will allow witnesses to inform the police to take action against offenders.

3. The Conference respectfully urges the RTG to reject away a proposal to issue health cards for service women because this is a discriminating measure. It will not curb the spread of sexually transmitted diseases as is its proclaimed purpose. Instead, it will allow government officials to have more opportunities for corruption in taking advantage of service women.

4. The Conference respectfully urges the RTG to abolish legal measures which force service women to be in state rehabilitation centres. Instead the RTG should establish vocational training centres which allow service women to receive training in the occupation that they see fit for themselves. These centres should receive enough financial support from the government.

5. The Conference respectfully urges the RTG to come up with strong measures to penalize owners of brothels and pimps who detain and force women to provide sexual services to male clients, including government officials who collaborate with them, by abolishing the 1960 Prostitution Act and bringing provisions relating to sexual matters in the Penal Code into force.

6. The Conference respectfully urges the RTG to order the police to strictly function to protect service women from being detained and exploited.

7. The Conference respectfully urges the RTG to regularly disseminate information about the police's successes in protecting the service women and penalizing those who detain the service women to the general public to create the public's favourable view toward the police who perform their duty well.

8. The Conference respectfully urges the RTG to enact and enforce a law protecting the service women's rights equally with other citizens and workers in the society.

9. The Conference respectfully urges the RTG to eradicate all forms and levels of sexual discrimination, allowing both women and men to have equal opportunities to develop the quality of life and capacity and live with dignity.

The participants of the International Women's Conference whose names are presented below respectfully urge your excellency and the Royal Thai Government to consider this proposal seriously. We very much hope that the government will respond to this proposal with cooperation to end the violence of prostitution which will benefit the world as a whole.